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# Collaborative work outcomes in a L2 class: learners' attitudes towards collaborative work

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# **UNIVERSITY of ST. MARK & ST JOHN**

Collaborative work outcomes in a L2 class: learners' attitudes towards collaborative work.

Submitted by:

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**To University of St Mark & St John as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts by advanced study in Education (special field: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), November 2014.**

I certify that all the material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me.

María Elena González López  
November 2014

## **ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this research paper is to inquire what learners' attitudes are towards working in a collaborative mode. Furthermore, what their modes of working preferences are in order to shape my classes design. For this purpose, learners who study English as a second language in a Mexican private university participated in a questionnaire and an interview. This was focused in three groups who were in A1 and A2 (CEFR) with forty-eight members through a period of six months.

The findings showed that most of the learners prefer working in a collaborative mode when they are facing a difficulty due to their lack of vocabulary, for instance; when they are giving presentations in front of class. These learners expressed the importance of feeling supported and being acquainted to their peers.

Whereas, a few number of learners claimed there were more advantages working in an individual mode. They assured that when they work in an individual mode they had more opportunities for insight of what they already learned and what they needed to correct. Moreover, they expressed their feeling disappointed when their peers did not have the same level of commitment to learning.

Interestingly, findings showed their interest in incorporating games in their classes. Learners of the three groups described enthusiastically the game- type activities where they felt collaborative worked the best. The characteristics of these games were interactive, fun and helpful for learning.

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS

This research paper was triggered by a query of L2 learners' participation on the design of my classes. Through time I had become unsatisfied by failing on my quest of strategies and activities that could make my classes more motivating and efficient. I used to assume my students needed to be taught everything, have little to contribute or they were not interested in learning. And, other times, I felt overwhelmed and frustrated when I failed to attend each one of their learning needs. Therefore, I invited my students to be part of the decisions I made to choose material and strategies. It has been a process of experimenting and asking their opinion; adapting and eliminating approaches and activities. With the intention of finding a balance between leading my students to become autonomous learners and to create the proper traits for learning within a classroom, I began to have my students work on a collaborative mode most of the times.

For this reason, I would like to emphasize that although I have observed the benefits for using CL in class, it is important to keep in mind learners' opinion. There are a few students who prefer working by themselves and are not interested in socializing much. Therefore, since the main objective is that everyone feels comfortable in class, I highly recommend respecting those learners' position and adapting activities to them too. In order to remember this, it is necessary to design classes where a variety of inputs and modes of working are included. When I began to experiment with activities and modes of working based on what their needs and interests in learning English were, I realized that young people have many positive traits that can offer to their peers and to make L2 learning more meaningful and balanced.

I am going to summarize what my students expressed in that time in order to explain how this process began. In the class interviews and a questionnaire in González (2012) learners expressed what they were interested in: (See Appendix 1)

- 1- A variety of activities where they could express themselves in a freer way.
2. Collaborative activities where they had to find a solution to a problem
3. Activities where they could use authentic material such as: songs, TV series, movies, and you- tube videos.
4. My active participation to explain, clarify and give them options of activities and resources to work with.



## **1.2 CLASS CONTEXT**

Learners of this study belong to a private university in Guadalajara, Mexico. The population of this research was 48 L2 learners who belonged to two groups that were in A1 level and one in A2 CEFR). Their ages range 18 to 37. They study different majors this university holds and they are required to take 8 hours a week. It is compulsory for them to obtain B2 level in order to graduate.

Students in my classes do not use text books; therefore they rely on copies of exercises I create and the internet. I organize classes using variety of inputs where they are exposed to the language in different forms in such as way they practice the four skills. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been used most of the times referring to having learners working with activities where they practice their speaking without making emphasis on their accuracy. However, grammar points are also explained for two reasons: 1) this institution includes a grammar session in their tests and 2) to help them have a structure background.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH PAPER**

This research paper is aimed to analyze what learners of L2 classes' attitudes are towards collaborative work of a private university in western Mexico and their reasons. The Research Questions I will be focusing on through this research paper will be:

- 1) In general, what are my learners' attitudes to working collaboratively?
- 2) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in a collaborative mode?
- 3) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in individual mode? If so, what reasons do they give for this preference?
- 4) In what ways should I modify lessons in response to findings from research questions 1, 2 and 3?

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter I will explore a number of concepts associated with collaborative learning. Firstly I will set out a comparison of three ways of working: Individual learning, competitive learning and cooperative learning. Secondly, I will write how motivation is fostered depending on the mode of working. Thirdly, I will describe how interaction in a L2 setting can influence in the learners' attitudes and cognitive process. Finally, I will explore how learners' autonomy is encouraged when working in the three modes: individual, competitive and collaboratively.

#### **2.1 MODES OF LEARNING**

Classes are regularly organized in three modes: individualistic, competitive, and collaborative. In the following chapter I will explain what each one consist of, then I will list their advantages and disadvantages for L2 learners. Johnson & Johnson (1987:1) claimed that knowing when and how using the three of them "is an instructional skill all teachers need."

##### **2.1.1 INDIVIDUAL LEARNING**

In this mode of learning, students work alone and that is fostered by three reasons. The first one is when the teacher is a lecturer and the only provider of the knowledge. Hence, learners have to rely on their learning skills and strategies. The second one is when learners consciously select to work on their own, even though the teacher promotes collaborative work. This can be for two reasons: a) shyness, thus they have trouble to relate and negotiate with others and b) lack of balanced level of commitment among peers. This means some may end up doing their peers' job and obtain the same score. On the other hand, another reason would depend on the learning goal and the activity. For instance: the students' learning goal is to identify: what they already know and what they need to learn. The latter stage could be to work individually, and then used to share that knowledge with their peer or peers in the communicative mode.

Learners who prefer to work by themselves may encounter with the following advantages: they can only rely on themselves; thus, they are not confronted on what they have decided, they can save time due to not having to

come to an agreement with their peers nor to re-estate what the teacher said to their peer, and they will not have to deal with free loaders. On the other hand, if this mode is only as a pre-stage to work collaboratively, learners may find beneficial to have the opportunity to identify how much they know of the topic. Besides, Jhonson and Jhonson (1987: 78) recommend learners who work in an individual mode 'monitor their own progress, pace themselves through the material, and evaluate their own progress.' However, there might be some disadvantages such as: they can feel under pressure due to receiving the whole responsibility on the final outcome, they may misunderstand the task's instructions, they may feel isolated and demotivated, and they may depend only on the teacher's clarification and input.

### **2.1.2 COMPETITIVE LEARNING**

In this mode of working the teacher promotes competition among learners. Competition can be presented with two different approaches. The first one is when learners' incentives are obtaining a high score, the teacher's approval, and the second one when they have opportunities to enjoy the activities while interacting with their peers. In this mode, there is a huge sense of success.

Learners competing against their partners may face the following advantages: they may give their best in what they do due to the pressure of succeeding, they may get a high score and get recognition from the school, teachers and parents, they may obtain a reward such as not having to take an exam or obtaining a diploma, and they may raise their self-esteem.

Whereas, in the second one, there can be a positive interaction when competition is used in a L2 class. Playing games may offer some advantages for instance: learners may find an amusing form of learning; they can offer an informal setting to learning and inter-dependability. Therefore, games also offer social opportunities to create a bond among participants in an enjoyable manner (Sindre 2009 in Sobhani & Sadegh 2014:1067) states: 'Educational games, compared to other types of learning material, could convey new concepts to players in a much funnier, communicative and active way.'

On the other hand, the disadvantages they may face are: they may feel under a lot of pressure thus they may feel unmotivated for learning, they may not succeed despite all the efforts, they may not be able to relate to others, they may feel isolated and without support, and their self-esteem may be affected by the feeling of embarrassment when they do not perform well. In the case of playing a game, some learners may miss the learning input and concentrate in just having fun in class.

### 2.1.3 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

During this mode there is interdependability among learners. They share their knowledge to support each other to accomplish the same learning goals established by the teacher.

Dornyei (1997) defines collaborative Learning (CL) as ‘the instructional use of small groups in order to achieve common learning goals via cooperation.’

When learners share their experiences and knowledge in pairs or in small groups, the following benefits may be obtained:

- Learners are motivated. Dornyei (1997) argues that “by focusing on the psychological dimension of CL. we can find the key to its effectiveness in the affective domain.’
- Learners have the opportunity of sharing previous learned structures, vocabulary, and skills.
- Learners support each other.
- Learners complement each other by sharing their strengths and supporting each other when they have questions. Dornyei (1997:490) states:

‘The absence of the detrimental effects of social comparison, accompanied by the increased peer acceptance and support that exists in higher perception of ability, self-worth, and academic self-esteem (i.e., self-efficacy) in CL groups than in traditional classes.’

- Learners can reach a more complete conclusion and task’s outcome

A learner of this study explained: “when we work in small groups your knowledge is strengthened; sharing information helps you get a better solution.”

- Learners become responsible for their learning.

(Han, 2014) explains: ‘students are no longer passive recipients of the knowledge and skills but active discoverers and constructors of knowledge’.

As shown above, if learners work in a collaborative mode, they gain several benefits in many situations for instance: they feel supported by their peers when they have questions and when they lack vocabulary, they construct what they learn by incorporating or correcting what they previously learned with the new knowledge they learn from their peers and they are focused to work on a common outcome.

Nevertheless, there can be disadvantages for instance: learners who are not interested in working with their peers, may have difficulty to cope with relating to their peers and the task. They may not do the activity

willingly; hence, they may lose their autonomy and may not be motivated during this process.

To conclude, all three modes of working: individual, competitive, and collaborative offer advantages and disadvantages for learners. For individual and collaborative modes, learners may face for opportunities of feedback of their learning and the competitive and the collaborative mode may lead to break routines and to motivate learners through social interaction.

## **2.2 MOTIVATION**

In this chapter, I will explore how motivation plays an important role in learning English as L2. I will explain the two forms of motivation Ryan and Deci (2005) divided into; intrinsic and extrinsic. Finally, I will illustrate how motivation is connected to the modes of learning used in class and learning autonomy.

### **2.2.1 MOTIVATION IN LEARNING**

Dornyei (2001:9) in his attempt to define motivation, recognizes that motivation is responsible for 1) why people decide to do something, 2) how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and 3) how hard they are going to pursuit it. There are different factors that can promote it. In this chapter, I will present two of them: intrinsic and extrinsic. Moreover, I will advise an approach in order to promote and sustain motivation.

### **2.2.2 INTRINSIC LEARNING**

Ryan and Deci (2000:56) define intrinsic motivation as:

‘the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge...’

What decisions can L2 teachers take to foster intrinsic motivation in learners? What benefits can be obtained? Since, there is a tendency to believe that if people’s motivation to do an activity is to enjoy it, there will be positive gains such as an open predisposition of trying harder for a longer time. Hence, when L2 teachers design a class, the idea of having such reaction is desirable. Then, in terms of class’ design, the method used in class is transcendental. Harmer (2001:78) defines method as ‘types of activities, roles of teacher and learners, the kind of material that will be helpful, and some suggestions of organizing the syllabus ’. As explained by Ryan and Deci, one of the most important features is the ‘free choice’ nature of the activity. With this intention, it is advised to make learners participants on the methods used in class.

In order to foster and maintain intrinsic motivation among L2 learners, it is important to keep in mind learners’ social, emotional and cognitive needs. One form is to offer a wide range of methods where the three modes of

working are used. For this reason, it is important to remember the individual's needs; thus, one form is to make L2 learning meaningful. As Dornyei (2001:126) states 'Students are not motivated to learn unless they regard the material they are taught as worth learning.'

In addition to this, there are other factors to consider such as a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. A learner in this study explains that he likes to learn to work with others, discuss a topic, practice his English, and to get to know his classmates when he was asked how he preferred working. In the following chapter, this matter will be discussed in more depth.

Given these points, when designing a class, the activities can move along from individual, competitive and collaborative mode. In other words, considering each learner has his own individuality, the three modes of working can be incorporated to maintain a balance.

### **2.2.3 Extrinsic Learning**

Ryan and Deci (2000:56) also define 'Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome.'

Extrinsic motivation arises from imposed goals by an authority such as passing an exam or having the opportunity of being promoted at work. In the event that learners of this study are compelled to study English in order to be able to graduate, many of them enter to the class with that motivation in mind.

Equally important, even though learners who enter to class with that predisposition, they may end up doing the activities with recognition of the learning input's utility. As Deci and Ryan quotes their Self-Determination Theory (1985) where it proposes a variety of types of extrinsic motivation.

'... some of which do, indeed, represent impoverished forms of motivation and some of which represent active, agentic states. Students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest or, alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task.'

On the other hand, in the hope of learners' extrinsic motivation may be intertwine with their intrinsic motivation if the right setting is present during the course. This means that if learners find L2 learning enjoyable, they may be intrinsically motivated as well.

In order to sum up, motivation can depend on the agentic opportunities, and in the value learners perceive of the tasks' characteristics. Ames & Ames (1984:537) present a framework of systems of student motivation table

where the three modes of working inspire learners to assess themselves.

Table 1

Systems of Student Motivation

Cognitive Factors	Ability-evaluative	Task Mastery	Moral Responsibility
Goal	Competitive	Individualistic	Cooperative
Salient Information	Self-other comparison	Self-self comparison	Self-group comparison
Attributional focus	Ability-related	Effort-related	Effort and cooperativeness
Self-evaluation and strategy focus	"Am I smart enough?" "Can I do this?"	"Am I trying hard enough?" "How can I do this?"	"Are we trying hard enough?" "How can we do this?"

As can be seen in Table 1, learners are interested in assessing the quality of their performance and the approach of the strategy to obtain a desirable outcome. Learners of this study showed concern of knowing how the performance was. Jaime explained that it was difficult to make a mistake when they are working with their peers.

### 2.3 LEARNING AS A SOCIAL ACT

In this chapter, I will describe how interaction in L2 classes may bring opportunities for learning. Although, such interaction is more obvious in the competitive and collaborative modes, the individual mode can present some social interaction if teachers offer it in a more flexible and adaptable setting. If learners are working on their own but they need to confirm, to enquire or even obtain feedback from their peers, they may be aware of the option if they need to do it.

As to connect learning with social acts, relationships with people around are an important motivational factor. (Johnson, 1990 in Storch, 2001:29) explains that 'CL learning produces social and cognitive gains.' It is even more among young learners. When a friendly environment in a L2 class is set, learners feel more at ease to learn and to help others to learn. It is relevant here to talk about socio-cultural theory because it impacts on the design of collaborative activities.

Vygotsky's social-cultural theory consists of four main elements:

- 1) Kids construct their own knowledge
- 2) Development cannot be separated from its social context
- 3) Learning can lead development
- 4) Language plays a central role in learning

Vygotsky also included in his theory the zone of proximal development (ZPD) in which he believed that a child could improve his learning if he were taught by a more capable one. In order to achieve this learning there has to be a process until shared understanding is reached. Also, the child's process was by means of constructing his previous knowledge with his peers.

In this case, young adults are taught and guided by their peers when they are interacting, negotiating, to arrive to an agreement.

Besides, to be able to promote learners' acquisition of L2, they should be active participants of the class. The teachers should design opportunities of collaboration and negotiation to come to an agreement and at the same time, they should raise an awareness of making mistakes as part of the learning process. Rojas (2001) quotes Corson (1999:89) saying that with this, 'learning becomes holistic, meaning-making process, risk taking and sees error making as inevitable and necessary.'

Hence, when learners are playing a game in small groups or they are working collaboratively with a task, they need to compare and analyze what they already know with their peers' knowledge.

Roberts (1998:35) explains:

'... our beliefs are tested and confirmed in social contexts, validated by the responses of others: learning is located within us, but its validation depends on social exchange.'

Kretchmar (20014:5) confirms that CL's special characteristics create the need of negotiating, and analyzing, thus, learning construction.

"... they (the learners) develop their structures of knowledge- by reflecting, analyzing, questioning themselves, working on problems, and so on" .



Finally, it is also important to consider the teacher's role in classes in the hope to foster a friendly environment to learn.

- The teacher should monitor accurate information is being used while learners are working collaboratively.
- The teacher plays a role of a facilitator and a couch in order to allow learners to assimilate and accommodate information (Kretchmar, 2014).

To conclude, when learners work collaboratively, they start a process of becoming autonomous learners and of getting away from depending on the teacher. Dornyei (1997:487) states '... students in a cooperatively structured class are in control of organizing their own learning, that is, there is considerable learner autonomy'

## **2.4 HOW CAN WE FOSTER LEARNER AUTONOMY?**

In this chapter I will describe what I have done to foster autonomy in my classes. Since, I have gone through a process of experimenting, I am aware there are more forms to do it. Thus, firstly I will present Dickinson's definition of autonomy in order to view what factors can contribute to lead learners through the process of gaining autonomy. Secondly, I will demonstrate how the teacher's role plays an important role to create opportunities for learners' autonomy. Thirdly, I will examine the benefits of negotiating with learners the methods used in class. Finally, how the three modes of working (individually, competitive, and collaborative) can be adapted to promote autonomy learning in a L2 setting.

Dickinson's (1987) claims that 'Autonomy is a situation in which a learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his/her learning and the implementation of those decisions.'

The questions that arise with this definition are 1) As a L2 teacher, do I truly desire my students accomplish autonomy? If so 2) what can I do as a L2 teacher to collaborate learners in my classes become 'totally' responsible for all the decisions with their learning? When answering the first question it is necessary that teachers be honest with themselves because ultimately they would do what they believe in concerning teaching decisions. (Icek Ajzen & Martin Fishbein, 2011)

(Michael P. Breen & Andrew Littlejohn, 2000) claim:

'Autonomous action is typified by thinking and acting according to one's own principles rather than habitually

conforming to someone else's. Hence, there must be transcendental changes in the class design. For instance, teachers must seek for flexibility and openness to set aside from being the central character on the classroom stage. Rojas (2001:328) quotes Ramirez, 1995):

‘... Classes must break away from their current format, in which teacher talk dominates; it is through interaction and negotiation of meaning that language is acquired and developed’

Then, unless the teachers moves aside and starts the process of negotiation, autonomy cannot be fostered.

Nevertheless, to assure a balance through this process it is important to take into consideration the individual's, the whole class', the teacher's and the school program's needs and specific goals as (Michael P. Breen & Andrew Littlejohn, 2000) explain.

Given the points above, for this reason negotiation plays an important role in the process of creating autonomous learning opportunities. Thus, it can lead to dynamic and diverse possibilities in a collaborative form (Michael P. Breen & Andrew Littlejohn, 2000).

Despite the fact, it is obvious the collaborative mode holds opportunities for helping learners to become autonomous, the individual and competitive modes may also offer forms to promote it. However, the key point is the communication that the teachers promote in order to adapt classes according to their needs and personality traits. Therefore, hopefully, the class design may offer a wide range of options to learners. One of the benefits is if autonomy is fostered, they can increase their opportunities for learning.

Dornyei (2001:131) explains 'Key issues include allowing students real choices, sharing responsibilities with the students for organizing their learning process and giving them the positions of genuine authority, and encouraging student contributions, peer teaching and project work.'

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This research paper was triggered when I realized that major changes needed to be made in my classes. For this reason I began to enquire among learners what they preferred doing in classes and to experiment with methods. When I realized that collaborative work brings several benefits for learners, for a moment, I had though I have found the "secret" key for teaching. In order, to continue with the same approach of enquiring from my pupils, I began to search what learners' attitudes towards collaborative work are in my classes. Thus, a qualitative enquiry was conducted by using a questionnaire and an interview. Henceforth, this paper attempts to analyze what factors can contribute to help L2 learners to feel motivated when working in the three modes: individual, competitive, and collaborative. Through the process, the advantages and disadvantages were

compared in order to search for a balanced class design. Besides, with the purpose of leading learners in my classes to become autonomous, other approaches were considered such as: making learners part of the class-design decisions, and the social act impact in learners' motivation.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. RESEARCH

#### 3.1 CONTEXT

Learners of this study belong to a private university in Guadalajara, Mexico. The population of this research was 48 L2 learners who belonged to two groups that were in A1 level and one in A2 (CEFR) through August to December. Their ages range 18 to 37. They are studying different majors like marketing, engineering, accounting, psychology, etc. and they are required to take 8 hours a week. It is compulsory for them to reach an upper intermediate of English B2 to graduate.

Students of these classes have different teachers every two months or every semester. The textbook of this program is *New American Inside Out* (Sue Kay and Vaughan Jones, 2008); however, in my classes, they do not use text books; therefore they rely on copies of exercises peers have shared with me or I create and exercises and activities from the internet. In addition to this, in order to promote learning autonomy, learners are allowed to use their phones or lap tops to search for information or to look up words in an on line dictionary. Rojas (2001:329) explains 'Technology should be embraced as a means to further students' enquiries through access to information and interaction.' I use the CLT approach where learners are trained to use the language in various modes and to practice the four skills. Hence, through tasks and games, collaborative learning is used most of the time. Additionally, learners' suggestions of activities are incorporated.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH SEQUENCE

The research was divided into four stages: the design of the overall research approach, design of the instruments, the application of such instruments, reflexions on the respondents' answers and conclusions.

##### 3.2.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research paper is part of the process of searching for ways to create suitable and motivating atmosphere to learn English in my classes. This quest has been shaped by L2 learners' opinion and suggestions. Thus, a qualitative research was conducted with the main objective of obtaining learners' attitudes in my classes towards working individual and collaborative modes. In order to do so, I designed a questionnaire and an interview. They were designed to answer mainly the following questions:

- 1) In general, what are my learners' attitudes to working collaboratively?
- 2) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in a collaborative mode?
- 3) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in individual mode? If so, what reasons do they give for this preference?
- 4) In what ways should I modify lessons in response to findings from research questions 1, 2 and 3?

### **3.2.2 DESIGN OF INSTRUMENTS**

In this chapter I will describe the reasons of selecting a Likert type questionnaire and semi-controlled interview for this research paper. Also, I will include some important data related to the circumstances that contributed in the selection of these instruments.

In order to continue taking into consideration the learners' perception and attitudes on their work preferences in a L2 class, a questionnaire and interview were applied. First of all, the questionnaire was designed in Spanish with the purpose of making learners of this study comfortable at explaining their attitudes since it is their L1. It contains Likert scales with 12 close questions where learners selected from given categories and an open-question to give them their opportunity to explain their reasons of their choice.

Whereas, the interview was also held in their L1 and has three questions which objective is to complement the obtained information from the questionnaire. It was a semi-controlled interview in order to obtain more accurate data.

When I selected the instruments to do this research paper, there were several factors that influenced on my decisions. First of all, I was aware that the process of enquiring had to be within the class time because of the various duties learners of this have after they take their class of English.

Thus, I selected to use a questionnaire. Zoltan Dornyei (2011:115) states 'One can collect a huge amount of information in less than an hour'

Secondly, for the purpose of creating a sense of no constraints to express themselves since the very beginning, a questionnaire holds the characteristic of giving options to arrange the moment to make it anonymous.

Furthermore, for learners who have difficulty to verbalize what their feelings and opinion are, this instrument may have offered them another option to express themselves.

I selected close- ended item type with multiple choice options in order to lead respondents to focus on their

frequency and their attitudes when working in an individual or collaborative mode. Since, they are not knowledgeable about the topic, by giving them options, it may have been easier for them to reflect and conclude what their attitudes are. Moreover, I included two open-ended questions with the purpose of allowing learners to express any attitude that was not included in the questionnaire with the question a) other options? And the last one b) why? I decided to include this last one based on my first questionnaire (see appendix 1) Sometimes, the learners' answers need to be focused and of some clarification. Besides as Dornyei (2011-107) explains 'open format items can provide a far greater richness... and can also lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated.'

In addition to this, I found some other advantages when applying a questionnaire in this research such as: It is easy and fast to answer and learners may feel at ease if they share common factors with their peers for instance: the location, similar experiences, needs and concerns.

The questionnaire focuses on three topics. Learners' attitudes towards working collaboratively and individually, in which activities they prefer working in an individual or a collaborative mode, and their attitudes towards my participation in class and when they are working collaboratively. For example: in question 2 and 12 (see appendix 3) are regarding the teacher's role while they are working in a collaborative mode; whereas, question 11 (see appendix 2) is regarding their attitudes when I am explaining something to the whole class.

As to including an interview as instrument, I elected it with the purpose of having the opportunity to expand the already information obtained in the questionnaire. As Dornyei (2007) states '... The interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on issues raised in an exploratory manner. Also, it is important to mention that although learners of this study may have lost the anonymity nature with this instrument, they were offered the opportunity of expressing themselves about their concerns as individuals. D. Freeman (1998) states 'Observations about the world depend on where you look and who you are.' Accordingly, the interview included three semi-structured questions which contributed to maintain interviewees and I focused. This fact was beneficial for the limitations of time as I mentioned before. With this in mind, it was also held in pairs giving each one of them turns to answer. At the same time, I had the opportunity to expand the data and to clarify when necessary. The questions were:

- 1) Do you have suggestions in order to create friendly and suitable conditions for Learning English?
- 2) Is there anything else you would like to say about collaborative to individual work?

3) Can you identify one 'collaborative activity' (pair work or small groups) you have done (recently) in class you felt it worked very well?

Question 2 and 3 were aimed to obtain additional information; nevertheless, I decided to include question 1 since I noticed that that was a good opportunity to search for ways to help my students of that course feel more at ease while they are learning and practicing English.

### **3.2.3 DATA GATHERING**

In this session, I will describe the approach to gather the information. I will include the purpose of such decisions for each instrument used in this research. During this process I will appraise the limitations caused by my playing two roles during the investigation: as a teacher and a researcher. Furthermore, I will narrate the actions I took in order to compensate those limitations.

When I applied the questionnaire, I was concerned of their feeling comfortable and their not being biased while answering it since I was their teacher and at the same time I was applying the instrument. I need to confess that while I was designing the instrument, it was hard to me to open up to receiving a disagreement of using others modes of working other than the collaborative mode. The realizations of this fact lead me to be more cautious of my comments and attitudes about the topic with my students. Consequently, I took some measures to assure my students felt free to express their opinion and attitudes. First, due to learners of this study are in levels A1 and A2 (CEFR), I gave them the instructions in their L1. In addition to this, while explaining the purpose of this study, I made emphasis on the importance of their honesty and there were not going to be any penalties or changes on my behavior. Moreover, the nature of the questionnaire is anonymous. Also, they were clarified that their responses are going to shape my current and future classes. Finally to guarantee the secrecy environment, I left them by their own and asked a learner to pick them up and call me in when they had finished.

During the interview, with the intention to create a friendly environment, we had a small talk about their day. During this process, the interviewees and I were in the next door classroom while the rest of the class was working on a task. I also explained the mobile phone was going to be used to record our conversation to help me have more accurate information. Additionally, I asked them if they felt comfortable with the recording process. None of them showed nor expressed being uncomfortable with the device. After that, when I was not certain I had understood their comments, I would rephrase what I had interpreted from their observations or

I would ask a question. Equally important, at the end, with the purpose of covering further comments, I asked if they had additional reflections to make as recommended by Dornyei (2007: 143).

### **3.3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter I will present and interpret the learners' responses in the questionnaire (See Appendix 4) and in the interview (See Appendix 5). At first, I will discuss what their attitudes are to working in a collaborative mode; after that, what the learners' tasks preferences are to work in a collaborative and in an individual mode.

I would like to explain what criteria I followed in order to interpret the numbers of the frequencies. The interpretations were founded mainly in the participants' responses of their reasons of their choice from the questionnaire and from the three questions of the interview. Questions 2 to 8 of the questionnaire, participants were asked about the frequency of their preference. They were offered: always, frequently, sometimes, sometimes, it depends, and never. After reading their reasons of their choices, I realized that some of the options were quite similar due to many of the answers were repeated even though they had five options to choose. With this, I concluded that I should have offered them fewer choices. Thus it was difficult to identify which option matched their preferences. Taking in consideration of the latter data, I conflated certain responses, for example: a) always and frequently, b) sometimes and depending on the activity, and c) never due to the similarities of the responses. With this, I can deduce that had I piloted the questionnaire with a short number of participants before giving it to everyone, I would have noticed it before.

On the other hand, due to the anonymity of the learners' responses, invented names are given when they are quoted.



### 3.3.1 LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TO WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

In this session, I will interpret the learners' responses from the question 10 (See Appendix 4) and the interview.

#### Question 10: When I work in groups I feel...

Feeling	Frequency
a) bored	2
b) anxious	3
c) confused	2
d) interested	15
e) relaxed	12
f) sure	13
g) others	1 (comfortable)
Total	48

7 learners expressed their sentiments were bored, anxious or confused when they work collaboratively. These learners expressed having problems with their peers' accountability. Marco said "I don't know if the others are going to work or they are going to be slackers" and Socorro explained "because we don't follow the same pace" 88% (See Appendix 4, question 1) of the participants expressed they prefer working in a collaborative mode. One of their interests is to compensate their feeling afraid of making a mistake due to their not being sure of having understood the instructions or lacking vocabulary for the activity. For instance, these L2 learners emphasised their feeling insecure of having to speak in front of others. As Monica explained "You can help and correct each other and I can feel better if I speak in front of the class knowing my classmates will help me if I forget something or I panic". Also, José said "We can help each other to explain what we didn't understand well"

On the other hand, they showed that the fear to an unexpected situation was an important factor to prefer working with people they already know rather than people they barely speak to. For instance:

Ana said "If you already know the people you are working with, you **know** what to expect"

Juan "you **know** how some people work"

Estela "Sometimes it is more comfortable to work with someone I like and **know**"

Hector "sometimes you **don't know** if the person you were assigned to work with **really knows** about the topic"

These learners assured they preferred to work with people they consider they complement them; thus they can feel more comfortable doing the activity. They also showed their concern of having a good relationship who

they are working with. For example:

Enrique said “The relationships are not always good with all your classmates”

Daniela “The relationship you have is vital to perform adequately”

Another attitude is their belief that each one’s knowledge and experience can be of help. This is closely related to their learning construction process. Learners construct their already acquired experience and knowledge with their peers’ contributions. Allan Pritchard (2009) explains that this is more likely to happen when learners are discussing about a topic. A learner in my classes, Jorge declared “It is easier, what one doesn’t know, another classmate knows. In this way we listen to every one’s opinion without missing the objective”.

Finally, some others admitted that they are interested in socializing. They explained in addition to having cognitive gains, they also get to know their classmates. Silvia claimed “you can learn how others work, discuss the topic, practice English and get to know your classmates”. When learners socialize in a L2 setting they are frequently motivated to learn and to be part of the experience of sharing ideas and aiding their peers. Williams (1997) assures that interaction will have an important influence on people’s motivation.

### **3.3.2 LEARNERS’ TASKS PREFERENCES TO WORK IN A COLLABORATIVE MODE**

Learners’ preference to work collaboratively in specific tasks depends on different factors. One of them is their perception of the difficulty level of the skill practiced in a task. For instance, they emphasized that when they need to speak, to listen to an audio, to do problem-solving activities, and to share information they had done for homework, they prefer to have the support from their peers. On the other hand, when they do an audio activity, they claimed they rather work by themselves as a pre-stage and then as a post-stage, they like confirming their responses with their peer.

In the following lines I will explain about the two most preferred tasks to work in a collaborative mode. The first one was is when they give presentations and their comments were obtained from the questionnaire (See Appendix 4, question 4) and the second one from the interviews (See appendix 5)

When they are asked to speak in front of class, 29 learners expressed they always and frequently prefer to work collaboratively because they feel nervous and insecure of making a mistake. However, the process of having searched, discussed and prepared the presentation with their peers makes them feel more at ease because they have built a bond of trust and support. Hence, they are sure that if they forget something or say something wrong, their peers are going to help them since in a sense what each one contributes is for the benefit for everyone.

Even though, this process has caused learners gain some benefits such as motivation, cognitive and social skills, they also were able to identify some drawbacks. For instance: distraction from the main objective of the activity caused by their peers who are more interested in socializing than in learning, inequality of learners' accountability due to having different interests, learners concerns on the relationship hence levels of trust or feeling free to express their opinion.

Seven learners assured they never want to give presentations in groups because they felt they can learn more if they do it individually; they have bigger challenges and they can practice speaking in front of a big group. The disadvantages were that the members of the groups didn't always have the same interest in the same topic, nor the same level of commitment hence; only one or two classmates were the responsible ones. According to Elizabeth "some of my classmates don't do their part so the objective is not accomplished" Moreover, they also claimed having difficulty to work with their groups outside the class. Raquel stated "it is hard to agree when the class is over so it is better to do it individually."

The second task that was most frequently chosen to work in a collaborative mode was the use of games. The three groups coincided on this preference and findings were gathered from the interviews (See Appendix 5: Table 1:A1, Table 2:A1, and Table 3: A7).

I would like to emphasized that although I have found many advantages in using games, this does not mean I used them in every class nor at all times. They have many advantages and I will describe them in chapter 4; however over using them, may cause trouble regarding the class atmosphere due to the fact learners may misunderstand the teachers' intentions. They may interpret that teachers just want them have fun (Handfield, 1992).

### **3.3.3 LEARNERS' TASKS PREFERENCES TO WORK IN AN INDIVIDUAL MODE**

In this session, I will evaluate the learners' responses from the questionnaire (See Appendix 4) and the interview. First of all, I would like to present what the participants' attitudes are when working individually and their explained reasons and after that I will include the activities they admitted preferring to work in an individual mode.

**Question 9: When I work individually I feel..**

Feeling	Frequency
a) bored	
b) anxious	1
c) confused	15
d) interested	10
e) relaxed	14
f) sure	6
g) others	2 (normal, distracted)
Total	48

12% (See Appendix 4, question 1) of the learners expressed they prefer working individually. There are mainly two attitudes concerning this mode. The first one is that they find more advantages working individually due to issues of their peers 'accountability. They explained that they can work faster because they do not have any distractions from their peers, they have more opportunities to observe their mistakes and to answer their questions, and they have no need of facing conflict if they have different opinion.

The second attitude is that only in some tasks they like to work individually, for example: completing exercises and when they are writing about themselves. In addition to this, when they need to read a text or answer some questions from a listening activity, they also opt for working in an individual mode. These learners showed they have metacognitive skills due to their interest in assessing their progress. Hence, when they work by themselves, they have the opportunity to analyze what they did fine or what their mistakes were in order to correct themselves. They also explained, that after this assessment, they like working in a collaborative mode.

It is significant that when the activity is about completing an exercise only 17 learners were inclined to always and frequently work with others while 21 sometimes preferred it and 10 learners like working individually. Since there were more comments that were in favor of working individually, I will list the advantages they mentioned. 64 % of the learners claimed they found more advantages working individually when they have to complete and exercise. The advantages were: they can identify their mistakes more easily, they can observe their advancement whether they have learned or not, they can concentrate more therefore it is more productive.

The comments they made were:

Julieta: "In this kind of activity I like to work by myself because if I make a mistake I can identify where I was wrong"

Arturo: "This is where we need to remember what we learned"

Martha: "It is more productive and faster when I work alone"

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I will make a summary of the findings from the questionnaire and the interview based on the research questions:

- 1) In general, what are my learners' attitudes to working collaboratively?
- 2) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in a collaborative mode?
- 3) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in individual mode? If so, what reasons do they give for this preference?

42 participants' attitudes were of being interested, at ease and assured when they work collaboratively. They explained that there the following advantages:

- a) They have their peers' support when they did not know a word's meaning, when they were not sure they had understood the instructions, or they shared the responsibility of the task's final outcome. Pablo said 'We could help each other to explain what we didn't understand' and Lorena declared 'we can all do the exercise being sure that we are doing it right because each of us contributed with something'
- b) They can complement each other by sharing different ideas and knowledge of the language. Lorena said "It is important to communicate and you can nurture yourself when you compare the information." and Felipe declared "You can have a better perspective of the topic and see new words" As shown above, participants are aware of the cognitive benefits when working collaboratively. Roberts (1998) quotes Jarvis 'experience alone is not enough; it needs to be complemented by interpretation of the experience'
- c) They also emphasized their interest of working collaboratively due to the fun of interacting with their peers. Look at the following comments.  
Manuel: "It is more dynamic and more fun than if you do it individually"

- d) They may feel less threatened speaking to a smaller group. 29 learners expressed that they always and frequently feel supported by their peers because of the pressure of standing in front of the whole class. They assured they felt less nervous and they could complement each other with their strengths. Moreover, some of them were concerned of having issues with pronunciation.

Most learners of this study selected working in a collaborative mode with certain tasks. Their reasons are when they feel they need the emotional and cognitive support for instance: when they lack the skill speaking with fluency in front of others or they do not have the enough vocabulary to express their ideas and conclusions.

On the other hand, when learners work in a collaborative mode, learning depends on their own knowledge and their contributions to their peers. Hence, when there is an activity where they need to investigate a topic as pre-stage with the main objective of sharing the data in small groups, they like working in this mode. However, there is a big concern in their peers' accountability. In the following chapter I will explain what changes I will make in order to find a solution.

Finally, learners expressed their preference for including more games in class. With this type of task, collaborative work is set in a natural form. Furthermore, there is interaction among their peers which fosters motivation for learning and bonds among learners. Games can be designed to allow learners to take control of the activity once they are familiar with it and the instructions. Hence, in this way, learners have control of their learning. In the following chapter I will explain how I use them in class.

As regarding the tasks they prefer to do in individual mode, they claimed that completing an exercise was the most preferred to work in an individual mode. They assured they need time by themselves to analyze and test their understanding of the topic. Furthermore, they also mentioned that when they work with a listening or reading activity, they prefer to do it in an individual mode. They admitted getting distracted with their peers or they avoided having the whole responsibility for the final outcome because they were relying on their classmates' help.

In order to conclude, in this study learners not only could identify what tasks they preferred to work in the three modes but they could also evaluate their reasons. Affective and cognitive interests trigger their preference.

For example: if their attitudes are of needing to feel assured, they are more inclined to work collaboratively or if their attitude is of interest of assessing their learning, they prefer to work individually. On the other hand, if they want to have a break and have fun, they prefer to work competitively with a game.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4 USING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

In what ways should I modify lessons in response to findings from research questions:

- 1) In general, what are my learners' attitudes to working collaboratively?
- 2) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in a collaborative mode?
- 3) Are there certain tasks which they prefer to do in individual mode? If so, what reasons do they give for this preference?

In this chapter, I will evaluate what changes I will make in my teaching in light of the findings from my students responses of the two used instruments. Firstly, I will relate how my beliefs in teaching are related to the decisions I have taken in class. Then, I will describe how some beliefs have been reshaped by the findings of this research. Hence, I will describe what actions I will take the changes related to collaborative learning. After that, I will describe what methods I will continue using fostered by the learners responses in both instruments. Finally, I will give my conclusions.

When I began experimenting with different approaches in order to adapt my students' cognitive and affective needs, I perceived that the collaborative mode suited my beliefs: Promoting autonomous learning and leading L2 students to construct their learning with social interaction through the use of authentic material rather than the use of a textbook may bring them a wider scope and input of the language. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975:14) state: 'The totality of a person's beliefs serves as the informational base that ultimately determines his attitudes, intentions, and behaviours.'

Nevertheless, whilst reading my students' responses and listening to their attitudes and suggestions, I realized that I need to change my approach since the first days of classes. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) also claim that new observations may lead to new beliefs. Therefore, during the introduction of the course, instead of letting know learners in my classes the way of working based on my choice, I will be enquiring what their learning preferences are. Due to the fact, courses at this university only last a period of two months or four months, this will be conducted through interviews in two stages: at beginning and in the middle of the course. Based on the idea "every group and every student is different", every class needs a design of the class according to their



needs and personality traits.

Also, considering this, I will design tasks where there are alternatives for working individually too. With this in mind, at first hand, I will ask who wants to work in a collaborative and who in an individual mode. In addition to this, giving some flexibility the learners who prefer working by themselves; this means they can be given the option of checking their exercise or if they are not sure of something.

Learners of this study showed that when they perceive the task or the skill more challenging they feel more assured if they have their peers' support. For this reason, if the activity's objective is to speak in front of class, or there is a reading or a listening activity that is more challenging, I am going to ask them to work in small groups of two to three members. However, if the activity's objective is to complete an exercise, I am going to ask them to work in an individual mode first then, if they are willing to compare and share answers with their peers, they will have option to do it or not. Another important key to ponder is the learners' attitudes of discomfort and stress for not having the required knowledge to express themselves or to comprehend an audio activity or a reading text. In order to help them feel more at ease in my classes, I will emphasize on working by stages. This means, they will work on building up their vocabulary with different approaches to assure they can understand and use the vocabulary words with more confidence. Additionally, they mentioned it in the questionnaire and the interviews.

As mention above, learners sometimes do not like working in a collaborative mode because of their peers' lack of commitment to work as much as their peers. Sometimes this fact draws attitudes of frustration and discomfort. Therefore, in order to avoid this situation, if they work in a collaborative mode, the rubric will include two scores: as a group and as an individual. For this reason, I am planning to work on rubrics that include both.

Equally important, learners also suggested including the following methods and materials:

writing activities that include guiding questions, speaking activities with writing a prior process stage, activities on the board where there is a review of the previous class topic or as a lead-in for the main class' objectives and the use of images have something in common;

As can be seen these activities on one hand, they all are part of the whole production skill outcome. That is to say that if they are going to speak in front of class, they already worked with vocabulary in a competition game, questions to help them reflect on the answers in an individual, and after that in a collaborative mode.

It is important to realize, learners show interest in being guided, step by step to the final production. Kretchmar (2014:5) "... they (the learners) develop their structures of knowledge- by reflecting, analyzing, questioning themselves, working on problems, and so on"

On the other hand, learners of this study also expressed their wish to have more games, videos, movies, and songs when learning English. Bisson et.al (2013) call games, videos, movies, and songs as informal exposure to the language and explain based in a study they made that 'these kinds of informal activities can facilitate language learning, even days afterwards."

Interestingly, informal learning displays traits where learners are exposed to real material regarding to videos, movies, and songs; whereas, games are more focused to accuracy and a non-natural form of use of the language.

In the following lines, I would like to explain why and how I use games in my classes. In the light of the participants' responses of their preference of having more games in class, I would like to explain how games can be a useful resource when working in the three modes. Games can be planned or can be used spontaneously when learners need an activity that can lift their spirit up when teachers observe they are tired, hungry, stress because of exam periods, etc. Therefore, the class can be divided into teams and the number of members will depend on the size of the group and of the game. Hence, they will be competing against their opponents. Although, the competitive mode can be obvious when we talk about games, the other two modes are present too. For instance, in a collaborative manner, learners need to collaborate with their team mates in order to succeed together. Accordingly, since learners get engaged at moment of playing, there is interdependability in a positive manner. On the other hand, even they belong to a team; each individual participant is contributing to reach the desirable result. Consequently, the individual mode is present as well.

The objectives can vary as I will describe them below. Learners may perceive games are just for the sake of having fun and are focused on winning, although, they can be practicing, reviewing and learning at the same time.

Games are played in my classes with different purposes. I like to include them at different stages of the class. For example:

a) At the beginning of class.

Since I have observed, when the class starts, learners need of some time to get adjusted to the language when using the four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading), games have been a friendly resource where their schemata can be activated, and they are good as a lead-in to the main topic and objective of the class.

Moreover, it can help late-comers to integrate to the class in a smoothly manner without affecting the class pace.

b) As Ice-breakers

When courses begin and learners are not acquainted to their peers, games may lower the tension because of not 'knowing' many of their classmates. Under those circumstances, games can help to create a friendlier atmosphere where they can feel more at ease when they have the need to communicate in another language. Sobani & Sadegh (2014) state that 'a game is a social experience'

c) Reviewing and practicing vocabulary and grammatical structures.

When it is necessary to assess if learners remember vocabulary or a grammatical structure that was taught beforehand, using games is a fast form of identifying what needs to be reviewed. This can be done either at the beginning or at the end of class as a wrap-up. By doing this, we start or end the class helping learners evaluate what was thought before.

d) Speaking and reading activities

Sometimes practicing these skills can provoke some resistance from learners. Regarding communicating activities, the reason is that sometimes learners do not feel confident in speaking with their peers due to lack of vocabulary and of being afraid of going through an embarrassing situation because of using the language improperly. Henceforth, games set the right atmosphere for speaking without being concerned or stressed since learners participate for the sake of playing and competing. Regarding a reading activity, many times teachers have to deal with the fact that learners are not used to reading nor they enjoy it. Hence, using games with a reading activity may help learners to have a positive attitude and to get involved with it; thus, they might be able to gain all the cognitive benefits when reading a text.

As a conclusion, there is a compelling evidence of the importance of having learners as participants of the class design. In order to do so, it is necessary to take into consideration that it takes time to make major changes. It is required to make classes learner centered and to experiment with learners' comments. They are interested in

giving their opinion on how to make English classes in a L2 setting an enjoyable experience for both learners and teachers. Hence, as teachers, it is important to stop assuming what can work efficiently in class without consulting learners. Besides, with this intention, it is transcendental to stop and analyze what we are doing and the reasons of our decisions.

Nevertheless, after assessing what I have been doing in classes lately, I come to the conclusion that there is no a single method or approach that can help learners to learn. At the end, it is a combination of various depending on the class we have in that moment and all the characteristics that each one holds. However, our decisions will be shaped on our beliefs and they may be reshaped depending on our new observations and experiences.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### QUESTIONNAIRE: LEARNERS' ATTITUDES WHEN PEER- TEACHING

These questions were made in order to know about your opinion and feelings about your participation with learning when you teach a language structure to your classmates.

1. Do you think teaching the language structure to your classmate helps you understand and use a structure? Yes/No/ Why? / another opinion?
2. ¿Do you believe that your classmate helped you understand and use a structure language when he/she presented a class?
3. Did you notice any change in your learning process after experimenting this kind of activity? What?
4. What do you prefer? The traditional way (teacher explaining and deciding the kind of activities) or this method (team work, presentation, exercises and activities chosen and given by you)? Why?
5. What was your reaction when you knew you were going to teach the language structure to your classmates?
6. How did you feel during the process? Motivated, unmotivated, stressed, relaxed, afraid, exposed, insecure, interested, bored, forced, or willing to do it. If there are other feelings, mention them.
7. Did you have a positive or a negative opinion when the activity was assigned? What was your opinion?
8. Did you change your mind about your opinion after teaching the language structure to your classmates?  
Yes/ No
9. Would you like to make any changes to this method? What? Why?

## APPENDIX 2

### CONCENT LETTER

Guadalajara, México

#### **Attitudes towards collaborative work in L2 learners**

Dear student,

I'm writing to you to invite you to participate in a research paper of my Masters. It is primarily focused on investigating how L2 learners feel and think about working collaboratively (in pairs or small groups).

Please read the following clauses carefully.

1. Your participation is completely voluntary.
2. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without having to give a reason.
3. You will be given clarification about any doubt you have about the nature of the research.
4. You will be interviewed to clarify information.
5. During the interview you will be recorded only if you agree to do it.
6. You will not be penalised or given a better grade. Your response will only be used for research purposes.
7. You will not get any financial reward.
8. You will have complete access to the collected data.
9. Data will be reported in complete anonymity with the utmost discretion.

If you agree, please sign this letter. Your cooperation will make great contribution to my research and I express my utmost gratitude in advance.

Yours sincerely,

María Elena González López  
Profesora de Ingles  
Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente.

'I freely give my consent to participate in this research. I am aware that this is a dissertation research of my Teacher of English. I have received a copy of this consent form.'

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Signature



### APPENDIX 3

#### QUESTIONNAIRE: Working individually vs working collaboratively

Thanks for taking the time to answer this questionnaire. There is no correct or wrong answer. Your honesty can guide me to help you learn in more comfortable and appropriate conditions.

Objective: a) To identify how you prefer working: individually or collaboratively.

c) To examine in which activities you prefer to work individually and which ones collaboratively.

Instructions: Read the following statements and complete them with the options given below and explain why.

There is no correct or wrong answer

1. In class I prefer to work...

a) Individually    b) in pairs    c) in trios    d) in groups of four    e) in groups of 5-7

Why?

2. I ... prefer the groups to be formed by the teacher

a) always    b) frequently    c) sometimes    d) depending on the activity    e) never

Why?

3. I prefer to work collaboratively when the activity is about sharing information researched for homework

a) always    b) frequently    c) sometimes    d) depending on the activity    e) never

Why?

4. I prefer to work collaboratively when the activity is about giving presentations

a) always    b) frequently    c) sometimes    d) depending on the activity    e) never

Why?

5. I prefer to work collaboratively when the activity is about solving a problem

a) always    b) frequently    c) sometimes    d) depending on the activity    e) never

Why?

6. I prefer to work collaboratively when the activity is about completing an exercise

a) always    b) frequently    c) sometimes    d) depending on the activity    e) never

Why?

7. I prefer to work collaboratively when there is a reading activity

a) always    b) frequently    c) sometimes    d) depending on the activity    e) never

Why?

8. I prefer to work collaboratively when there is a listening activity

a) always b) frequently c) sometimes d) depending on the activity e) never

Why?

9. When I work individually I feel...

a) bored b) anxious c) confused d) interested e) relaxed f) reassure g) others - which?

Why?

10. When I work collaboratively feel...

a) bored b) anxious c) confused d) interested e) relaxed f) reassure g) others - which?

Why?

11. When the teacher explains everything I feel

a) bored b) anxious c) confused d) interested e) relaxed f) reassure g) others - which?

Why?

12. When the teacher supports us with comments while we are working I feel...

a) bored b) anxious c) confused d) interested e) relaxed f) reassure g) others - which?

Why?

**Thanks a lot for your time and your comments.**

**María Elena González**

## APPENDIX 4

### Questionnaire Results

#### Question 1: In class I prefer to work ...

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) Individually	6	12
b) in pairs	17	36
c) in trios	14	27
d) in groups of four	9	19
e) in groups of 5-7	2	14
Total:	48	100

#### Question 2: I prefer the groups to be formed by the teacher

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) always	9	19
b) frequently	5	10
c) sometimes	15	31
d) depending on the activity	12	25
e) never	7	15
Total:	48	100

#### Question 3: I prefer to work in groups when the activity is about sharing information researched for homework

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) always	10	21
b) frequently	17	36
c) sometimes	11	23
d) depending on the activity	5	10
e) never	5	10
Total:	48	100

**Question 4: I prefer to work in groups when the activity is about giving presentations**

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) always	20	41
b) frequently	9	19
c) sometimes	5	10
d) depending on the activity	7	15
e) never	7	15
Total:	48	100

**Question 5: I prefer to work in groups when the activity is about solving a problem**

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) Always	19	40
b) frequently	18	37
c) sometimes	7	15
d) depending on the activity	4	8
e) never		
Total:	48	100

**Question 6: I prefer to work in groups when the activity is about completing an exercise**

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) always	10	21
b) frequently	7	15
c) sometimes	11	22
d) depending on the activity	10	21
e) never	10	21
Total:	48	100

**Question 7: I prefer to work in groups when there is a reading activity**

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) always	7	15
b) frequently	10	21
c) sometimes	8	16
d) depending on the activity	6	12
e) never	17	36
Total:	48	100

**Question 8: I prefer to work in groups when there is a listening activity**

Options	Frequency	Percentage %
a) always	14	29
b) frequently	10	21
c) sometimes	8	16
d) depending on the activity	10	21
e) never	6	12
Total:	48	100

**Question 9: When I work individually I feel..**

Feeling	Frequency
a) bored	
b) anxious	1
c) confused	15
d) interested	10
e) relaxed	14
f) sure	6
g) others	2 (normal, distracted)
Total	48

**Question 10: When I work in groups I feel...**

Feeling	Frequency
a) bored	2
b) anxious	3
c) confused	2
d) interested	15
e) relaxed	12
f) sure	13
g) others	1 (comfortable)
Total	48

**Question 11: When the teacher explains everything, I feel ...**

Feeling	Frequency
a) bored	2
b) anxious	1
c) confused	3
d) interested	27
e) relaxed	10
f) sure	5
g) others	0
Total	48

**Question 12: When the teacher is explaining to my group while we are working, I feel ...**

Feeling	Frequency
a) bored	
b) anxious	
c) confused	
d) interested	18
e) relaxed	4
f) sure	21
g) others	5
Total	48

## APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW TABLE 1 (A2 group)

Note: The number of “+” represent the times learners agreed on the same opinion.

A) Do you have any suggestions in order to create friendly and suitable conditions for learning English?	B) Can you identify one ‘collaborative activity’ (small-group work or pair work) you’ve done in your class which you felt worked very well? Briefly describe this.	C) Is there anything else you’d like to say about using collaborative activity compared to individual work?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More interactive activities where you play a game. + + (memory games)</li> <li>2. Watch a movie and answer some questions. + +</li> <li>3. The way the class was</li> <li>4. I liked that the objectives were written on the board: You could see there was a plan.</li> <li>5. There were times I was afraid of speaking but I wished you had forced us to speak more.</li> <li>6. I wish English classes had only 15 students.</li> <li>7. I wish we had more freedom to practice where we didn’t have to be graded.</li> <li>8. I liked that we did not use a book and you made us interact with each other.</li> <li>9. To change the schedules, not so early or so late.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Legend telling ++++++: ‘I liked that first we read about it, then, talked about it, after we had to draw the story, and then each one of us had to tell a part of it.</li> <li>2. Verb forms on board competition. + +</li> <li>3. Running dictation: because we had to help each other.</li> <li>4. Apple workers reading activity: I liked that everybody had to contribute with something.</li> <li>5. Activities on the board at the beginning of the class.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I like to work in both ways. +</li> <li>2. I liked working in pairs.</li> <li>3. I’d like to have the midterm and final exams to be done in groups too.</li> <li>4. I’d like to work more in teams doing off-class homework. +</li> <li>5. I wish you had forced some us more to work with other people because especially my friends and I always worked together.</li> <li>6. I like working individually when you have to complete phrases to see how I’m doing. After this checking with someone else or with the class.</li> <li>7. I like to work in both ways. For example when we had to talk or write about ourselves, individually is better.</li> <li>8. I liked that there were times we did not know something but others did. + + + +</li> </ol>



		<p>9. I liked the way we worked and that you moved us to work with our peers where we could be corrected if we had the wrong idea.</p> <p>10. I liked to have quizzes in teams.</p> <p>11. I lost the fear to speak in these classes because I felt comfortable speaking to few partners.</p>
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## APPENDIX SIX

INTERVIEW TABLE 2 (A1 group 1)

A) Do you have any suggestions in order to create friendly and suitable conditions for learning English?	B) Can you identify one 'collaborative activity' (small-group work or pair work) you've done in your class which you felt worked very well? Briefly describe this.	C) Is there anything else you'd like to say about using collaborative activity compared to individual work?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I would like have more games.++</li> <li>2. When you use images, it helps.</li> <li>3. I would like to work more with pronunciation.</li> <li>4. I like to have a reading activity and then you ask us what we understood.</li> <li>5. I like to have dynamic activities.</li> <li>6. I like that you speak English most of the times but if you see that we don't understand you sometimes explain in Spanish.</li> <li>7. I like to work with find someone who activities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completing exercise about a friend of yours using verb to be and simple present.</li> <li>2. When we were describing from images what the people are wearing.</li> <li>3. When you showed us an image of a person and you asked us the names of the face parts.</li> <li>4. Asking personal questions and then writing a paragraph. +++</li> <li>5. The chart that we had to complete about our habits and the frequency and then we had to ask our classmates.</li> <li>6. Completing exercises on the board with "a" and "an".</li> <li>7. When we introduced each other to our group but you gave us some phrases to complete first.++</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I think it is better to do it in pairs because if we ask the whole class, we start inventing and playing around.</li> <li>2. I like to work in small groups. +++</li> <li>3. I prefer to work by my own with quizzes.</li> <li>4. I didn't use to like to work in small groups because I'm a perfectionist but in this class I learned to do it.</li> <li>5. I like that you make us to work with different classmates.</li> </ol>

## APPENDIX SEVEN

INTERVIEW TABLE 3 (A1 group 2)

A) Do you have any suggestions in order to create friendly and suitable conditions for learning English?	B) Can you identify one 'collaborative activity' (small-group work or pair work) you've done in your class which you felt worked very well? Briefly describe this.	C) Is there anything else you'd like to say about using collaborative activity compared to individual work?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It would be a good idea that you went with us to guide us to the language laboratory to have a speaking activity with other tutors.</li> <li>2. To have more videos in class.</li> <li>3. To work more with pronunciation exercises. +++</li> <li>4. I prefer to write first then to speak. +++</li> <li>5. I liked when you used images in class.++</li> <li>6. To have role plays representing everyday situations. ++</li> <li>7. I would like to work with games.+++</li> <li>8. I would like to go the language lab and that you assign us to have different activities in small groups.</li> <li>9. I think we can learn with movies or with songs.</li> <li>10. I would like to have debates.</li> <li>11. I would like to read out loud.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bingo game with adjectives to practice comparatives and superlatives.</li> <li>2. The game with verbs.++++</li> <li>3. The one minute-talk activity about any topic.++</li> <li>4. The activity with the song of U2 where we had to identify the present perfect sentences. +++</li> <li>5. To have the verb quizzes.</li> <li>6. I like to write on the board at the beginning of the class.</li> <li>7. I liked to have reviews of what we saw in the previous class. ++</li> <li>8. Writing a paragraph about our best friend by answering some questions and then we talked about it in front of class. +++</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I would like to have more the whole group discussions instead of working in small groups.</li> <li>2. Only to work in teams when we have role plays.</li> <li>3. I prefer to work with classmates I know because I feel more comfortable to ask questions. ++</li> <li>4. I like to work individually when you need to complete an exercise.</li> <li>5. Sometimes it is not necessary that you ask us to work with our classmates because we normally work by ourselves then if we have questions or we are not sure we ask them.</li> <li>6. I prefer to work in pairs. +++</li> <li>7. I prefer to work with reading and audios individually first and after that the whole</li> </ol>

		<p>group.</p> <p>8. I like to work in small groups because we complement each other.</p>
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